



MSOL CELEBRATES 60 YEARS

By 2016–2017 MSOL Board President Janet Cabot



MSOL members in the news, June 1970. Headline: 'Friends' of Civic Music Promote Concerts.

Eisenhower was president and ladies wore white gloves to luncheons when the Women's Committee of the Madison Civic Music Association was organized on June 7, 1956! As noted in a history written for the 50th anniversary, the organization began when founders Mrs. Helen Marling Supernaw and Mrs. Viola Ward gathered ladies in the home of Mrs. Adolph Bolz to form a group to support the Madison Civic Symphony (precursor to the Madison Symphony Orchestra). Based on an idea that they had gleaned while attending an American Symphony Orchestra League convention, group membership was by invitation only and limited to 100 women. It wasn't until twenty years later that then president Marian Bolz opened the membership to "anyone desirous of" supporting the Madison Symphony Orchestra (MSO). The name of the reconstituted organization was changed to the Madison Symphony Orchestra League (MSOL) as it is known today.

In the early years, concerts were free, held on Sundays at a local high school, and comprised not of professional, paid musicians, but of people in the community who loved making music together. In a newspaper article on the 40th anniversary, Past President Sally Jamieson recounted that "these concerts were major social events in the community and the Women's Committee provided refreshments at intermission for the orchestra. It was also our job to deliver flowers to the performing artists." Women's Committee members also acted as concert hostesses and greeters.



MSOL past presidents at the 40th anniversary celebration (l-r): Margaret Schroeder (1990–91), Sally Jamieson (1958–60), Viola Ward (founding president, 1956–57), Fern Lawrence (1996–98), Linda Graebner (1996–97)

Over the decades, there have been many League projects to provide financial support to the Symphony. A few highlights of the creative activities undertaken by the MSOL include:

- Sharing members' recipes in two cookbooks: *Composition for Cooking*, and a sequel, *Composition for Cooking Opus II*. The first cookbook was acknowledged by *Ladies Home Journal* magazine as one of the outstanding regional cookbooks in 1974.
- Turning the LaFollette home in Maple Bluff into the first Symphony Designer Showhouse. More than 14 other homes were decorated and opened to the public to benefit the Symphony.
- Modeling the latest fashions (Halston Originals) at Style Shows, which continued for more than 20 years.
- Transporting music lovers to a virtual Vienna at two New Year's Eve Viennese Balls (2002 and 2003)
- Creating Concert on the Green, a golf tournament, concert, and gourmet picnic at Bishop's Bay Country Club. Conceived by the late Candy Gialamas, the event will be back at Bishop's Bay for the 23rd year on June 19, 2017.
- Introducing "Parties of Note," a series of small, themed parties that are detailed in a printed "Passport." MSOL Member Marilyn Ebben brought back the concept, now in its

11th year, from a League of American Orchestra convention.

- Launching the John DeMain Award for Outstanding Commitment to Music. This award is now the centerpiece of the Fall Gala.

Raising funds to support the Symphony is only one part of the MSOL's story. Before the MSO had an education director on staff, committed volunteers functioned as the education department. In 1990, Nan Becknell, Ellen Simenstad, and Judy Braucht designed a docent program to prepare elementary students to attend the Fall Youth Concerts. Today, the legacy of their efforts and the efforts of many others continues as MSOL members support the MSO's nationally-recognized education and community engagement programs as docents.

Although the world has changed greatly since 1956, what hasn't changed over the years is the MSOL's commitment to the Symphony's artistic, financial, and education mission. The connective thread that weaves through the decades is a passion for music and the joy of the friendships and sense of community that has come from supporting our Symphony. This enthusiastic commitment to the MSO lives on!

To conclude the anniversary year, the MSOL will honor past presidents at its annual meeting and spring luncheon on May 12, at Maple Bluff Country Club.